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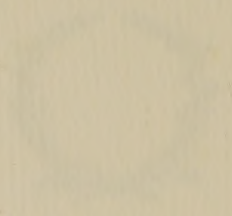
IN MEMORY OF
CHARLES MASON FAIRBANKS

AN INTRODUCTION TO
AN INTRODUCTION



NEW YORK
PRIVATELY PRINTED
CHRISTMAS
1924

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AN INTRODUCTION TO AN INTRODUCTION

THE inspiration for the Christmas books published each year in my name was my father, Charles Mason Fairbanks.

At Christmas, in the year 1908, the first volume was printed. That charming poem of Gustave Nadaud, "Carcassonne", together with the equally charming poem by Julia C.R. Dorr, "To One Who Went to Carcassonne", was the selection. The volume was printed for my father as a Christmas gift for distribution among his friends, and was graced with a delightful introduction by his hand. So great was the response that the publications were continued each year, the choice of subjects being guided by his tastes. In every instance except one, the introductions were his and so delightfully done that they were really the motifs of the books.

To revert to the first volume, in the introduction to "Carcassonne", the ballad of unfulfilled desire, a melancholy note was sounded that even the cheerful optimism of Mrs. Dorr's "To One Who Went to Carcassonne", with its suggestion of "dreamhaunted Arcady", failed to still. This was due to the chance of Fate that had made impossible his cherished desire to go abroad—to actually achieve "Carcassonne".

So it was a happy chance that made it possible for us to sail away together in the Spring of 1923 for a trip of adventure to those unknown shores beyond the sea, proving that "Carcassonne" is not a myth.

As an appreciation of the trip an account of our travels and adventures and impressions was to be set down as the subject for the 1923 book. The earthquake in Japan in September, 1923, necessitated an immediate journey on the return from Europe, so no book was possible. Then a change for the worse left my father so miserable that he was practically incapacitated until the day of his death.

Among his papers I find the introduction written for the "next book". It serves as the body of this book and is offered as a tribute to the memory and genius of my father. To those of you who knew and understood him

no explanation is necessary—to our other friends it must be taken as an indication of how futile it would be for me to attempt to continue the series.

In the face of his own writings what I've written sounds more like a personal history than an introduction, but it seems to emphasize what these Christmas books would be without his genial foreword.

Thackeray, his favorite author, expressed the feeling I try to convey so fittingly in his poem, "The End of the Play", that with this in mind I turn back to the introduction to that volume, published in 1915, and use my father's own words as a greeting to all our friends, and as a prelude to that unfinished but beautifully expressed preface that follows this very humble introduction.

"It was Mr. Thackeray's fortunate fate to 'lay the weary pen aside' on the very eve of a Solemn Christmas-tide of which he sang not too mournfully. The season, of course, is one of 'health and love and mirth'. But there comes at some time in every life a moment when the lights go out and the curtain is dropped and the bright pageant of existence is shrouded for a while. It is the end of the play. We all know well enough that the curtain will rise and the show go on again, and tomorrow's audience will

clap its hands in renewed applause. But to a few, the performance will never be quite the same."

THOMAS NAST FAIRBANKS

Christmas, 1924

THE self-sacrificing Father who takes his son to the circus is proverbial, and we know with what enjoyment Mr. Thackeray took little Bobby Mistletoe to the Drury Lane Pantomime at Christmas, on the way to which indeed he and Bobby dined on "a beefsteak and an apricot omelette". Mr. Thackeray has recorded the pleasure he had in the night's adventure. What of Bobby's reactions? We may guess that they were happy and their imprint on his impressionable mind were clear and lasting. The time would come when he might in turn be some lad's guide to fairyland too.

In the constant succession of rising generations and the corresponding progress of the Elder, like a crab backwards to a second childhood, it may befall that the boy who is father to the man, may find it in his province to take his Dad to the pantomime. This is indeed a reversal of the usual order. Most boys haven't time for their Dads. But this thing may happen, and the old man's reaction under the tutelage of the son, and the son's reaction as his father's guide, philosopher, and friend are not without a curious sort of interest.

There is such a case in mind. The son, who had ridden on Jumbo's back, paying in peanuts, and had enjoyed the mysteries of the pantomime, was encumbered with a sire who had fallen out of step with the day, but had never quite lost his relish for the joys of a long lost youth. He dreamed now in retrospect of activities in which he no longer sought to take part, and his somewhat lonely life was lived in the glow of an approaching sunset, in the illuminated clouds of which he saw and held discourse with the authors and their heroes, which had been his heroes in his never wholly lost days of boyish hero worship. They now were dreams that he no longer hoped to realize. He never should see Carcassonne!

But he did.

C.M.F.

[FINIS]

*Of this book three hundred copies were printed for
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